

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /079 W
-----041919Z 000446 /41

R 041946Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2451
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMCONSUL TORONTO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, FR, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC MINISTER MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT TO
FRANCE

REF: QUEBEC 166

SUMMARY: MORIN'S VISIT TO FRANCE WORKED OUT EXACTLY
AS PREDICTED REFTEL. HE WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT
GISCARD BECAUSE THE CURRENT FRENCH ADMINISTRATION
CANNOT AFFORD TO BE LESS GAULLIST THAN ITS
PREDECESSORS ON EMOTIONAL ISSUES OF THIS TYPE. BUT
THE GOF TRIED TO DOWNPLAY THE IMPORTANCE IN ORDER
TO MAKE SURE RELATIONS WITH OTTAWA REMAIN ON AN
EVEN KEEL. TRUDEAU HAS INVITED HIMSELF TO VISIT
GISCARD ON MAY 12, AND THE FRENCH ARE HAPPY TO HAVE
THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE THEIR DESIRED POSITION OF
NEUTRALITY. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE QUEBEC
PROBLEM WILL HAVE MORE OF AN IMPACT ON FRENCH
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POLITICS THAN GOF POLICIES WILL HAVE ON CANADA.
END SUMMARY

1. QUEBEC MINISTER OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
CLAUDE MORIN, MADE OFFICIAL VISIT TO PARIS APRIL
27-29. WHILE HERE HE HAD TALKS WITH PRESIDENT
GISCARD D'ESTAING, PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND FOREIGN

MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD.

2. ACCORDING TO FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO HANDLED MORIN'S VISIT, THE MINISTER EMPHASIZED THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FRENCH HIERARCHY.

THE CURRENT QUEBEC POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS DETERMINED TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. THE QUEBEC PROBLEM CANNOT BE TREATED MERELY AS A CULTURE THAT HAS TO BE PRESERVED, WHICH IS THE TRUDEAU SOLUTION, BUT AS A NATION WHICH NEEDS INDEPENDENCE.

FIRST PRIORITY FOR AN EVENTUALLY SOVEREIGN QUEBEC WILL BE A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REST OF CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES. WITH CANADA, ECONOMIC AND DEFENCE ARRANGEMENT WILL BE NECESSARY.

MORIN DOWNPLAYED THE TERM "SEPARATISM". QUEBEC WANTS NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, BUT NOT SEPARATISM FROM THE REST OF CANADA.

AS INDICATED REFTTEL, MORIN TOLD HIS HOSTS THAT FRANCE IS NOT BEING ASKED TO GIVE ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR QUEBEC'S DRIVE TOWARD SOVEREIGNTY. MORIN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING "QUEBEC IS NOT FRANCE. WE ARE A NORTH AMERICAN NATION THAT IS FRENCH SPEAKING."

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3. THE AMBIVALENT FRENCH RESPONSE TO THE NEW SITUATION IN QUEBEC WAS EVIDENT IN THE WAY THE GOF HANDLED THE VISIT. BECAUSE THE GOF CANNOT AFFORD INTERNALLY TO BE ACCUSED OF INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR QUEBEC NATIONALISM, MORIN WAS RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENT AND WAS GIVEN THE FULL RED-CARPET TREATMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOF DOES NOT WISH TO ASSUME ANY SORT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO AN EVENTUAL SOVEREIGN QUEBEC, NOR DOES THE GOF WISH TO GET INTO TROUBLE WITH OTTAWA. SO, ALL GOF STATEMENTS DURING AND

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USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /079 W
-----041923Z 000552 /41

R 041946Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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AFTER THE VISIT WERE DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT NOTHING HAS CHANGED. THE LINE WAS THAT THE GOF HAS ALWAYS HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH QUEBEC THAT OTTAWA HAS APPROVED, AND THIS WILL CONTINUE, AT SIMILAR LEVELS AS IN THE PAST. BECAUSE ALL PRIME MINISTERS OF QUEBEC HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INVITED TO VISIT FRANCE EARLY IN THEIR ADMINISTRATIONS, LEVESQUE HAS BEEN INVITED TO COME IN THE FALL OF 1977. AS ONLY THE FRENCH CAN DO IT, THE IMAGE IS ONE OF FULL SUPPORT FOR QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY, BUT THE LANGUAGE IS VERY LOW KEY.

4. THE FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM WAS ILLUSTRATED BY MORIN'S VISIT TO THE PARIS CITY HALL WHERE HE WAS THE FIRST FOREIGN VISITOR TO BE OFFICIALLY RECEIVED BY GAULLIST MAYOR JACQUES CHIRAC. WITHOUT ANY SUBTLETY, CHIRAC SAID THAT HE
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WISHED QUEBEC FULL SPEED AHEAD ON ITS QUEST FOR POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE WHICH HAS THE COMPLETE SUPPORT OF FRANCE. OUR QUAI D'ORSAY SOURCES SAY THAT MORIN WAS MORE EMBARRASSED BY CHIRAC'S PERFORMANCE THAN THE FRENCH WERE.

5. FINALLY, OTTAWA'S SENSITIVITY TO THE FRANCO-QUEBEC RELATIONSHIP WAS BROUGHT OUT BY PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU'S SELF-INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS ON MAY 12, RIGHT AFTER THE LONDON SUMMITS. TRUDEAU AND GISCARD WILL LUNCH TOGETHER THAT DAY. WHILE OTTAWA IS DENYING THAT TRUDEAU'S VISIT HAS ANY CONNECTION WITH THE MORIN VISIT, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY INFORMS US THAT TRUDEAU SUGGESTED HIS VISIT ONLY AFTER MORIN'S WAS ANNOUNCED. SOURCES IN BOTH THE PRESIDENCY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TELL US THEY ARE DELIGHTED WITH THE TRUDEAU VISIT BECAUSE IT WILL HELP THE GOF DEMONSTRATE A NEUTRAL POSITION IN THE OTTAWA-QUEBEC RELATIONSHIP. WE NOTE FROM THE WIRE SERVICES THAT TRUDEAU TOOK THE DECLARATION OF THE MAYOR OF PARIS MORE SERIOUSLY THAN MOST FRENCH PEOPLE. TRUDEAU REPORTEDLY ASKED HOW CHIRAC SQUARES HIS ADVOCACY OF QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY WITH HIS OPPOSITION TO REGIONAL AUTONOMY FOR BRITTANY AND ALSACE.

6. COMMENT: THE QUEBEC PROBLEM WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A MINOR BUT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT ON FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS AS IT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, AND FRENCH POLITICAL LEADERS WILL HAVE A CONTINUING PROBLEM IN RECONCILING FRENCH EMOTIONS AND FRENCH NATIONAL INTERESTS. WE DO NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT GOF POLICIES WILL HAVE MORE THAN ONLY SLIGHT PSYCHOLOGICAL RELEVANCE TO WHAT HAPPENS IN CANADA. AS OUR FRENCH FRIENDS READILY ADMIT, WHAT REALLY COUNTS IS QUEBEC'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANGLOPHONE CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, MEETING REPORTS
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Sent Date: 04-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS13190
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770156-0988
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770595/aaaadeer.tel
Line Count: 209
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 36568c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 QUEBEC 166
Retention: 0
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Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2644277
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QUEBEC MINISTER MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE
TAGS: PFOR, FR, CA, (MORIN, CLAUDE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/36568c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009